

# NEWSLETTER

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## Message from the President:

Dear OSA members,

This year the Oromo Studies Association (OSA) is celebrating the 25th anniversary of its formation. The founding mothers or sisters and fathers or brothers of OSA envisioned the need to form a scholarly organization where research issues that are relevant to the Oromo people can be raised and openly discussed. Up until that point, the Oromo people had been denied the right to ask research questions. Given that the Oromo people were denied the means to express their views, they conveyed their anger and dissatisfaction with the colonial power relations through the song known as gerarsa. Here are the lyrics:

Afaan Oromoo	English
Akkam tanee akkas taneee?	How did we become the way we are now?
Moofa uffatu taanee	We became the impoverished who wear ripped clothes
Doofa uf gaatu tanee	We became foolish, illiterate and ignorant
Fayya, dhukubsatu tanee	We were healthy, but now we are sick
Beeka walaala tanee	We were knowledgeable, now we became uninformed
Otto qabnuu deega tanee	While we have plenty we became impoverished
Akkam goone tanuree ?	What can we do about it now?
Kaam gooree jalaa banuree?	How can we overcome these burdens?

Probably the unknown songwriter asked research questions that the Oromo Studies Association (OSA) has been asking. Now we clearly know how and why the Oromo people fell under Abyssinian colonial rule and have a clear understanding what the colonial power relation has brought to the Oromo people. As the poem itself suggests, colonialism has brought to the Oromo people an institutional breakdown, which has affected their coping abilities and resulted in poverty, diseases, and helplessness. The Abyssinian colonial powers denied the Oromo people their rights to determine their affairs. Colonialism has brought environmental degradation and pollution. These complex problems are seriously threatening the very survival of the Oromo people. However, the last two questions that the unknown songwriter asks still require further research.

What can we do about the denial of the right of Oromo people to self-determination, the environmental degradation, the institutional breakdown, the denial of leadership, the poverty and widespread preventable diseases in Oromia? How can the Oromo people be empowered to develop their own leadership, identify their own needs, bring together their own human and natural resources and address these in culturally acceptable, economically viable ways? This is the challenging question that the OSA members need to try to answer.

The challenges that the Oromo people face are very complex. The answers to such complex challenges should be multifaceted. The answers to these questions cannot come from one field of studies but from diverse research focuses. For example, historians can help us see the past in order to understand the present and envision the future. Sociologists can help us to explore how we as individuals, and

collectively, construct, maintain, and alter our social organization. In doing so they can help us understand how we maintained or lost our institutions under Abyssinian colonial rule. Environmental students can assist us in understanding the ways that environmental degradation occurs and the techniques that can stop or fix it. Chemists can help us comprehend the pathways through which certain chemicals go into our food chains. Health science students can help us understand the ways biochemical exposure or deficient social conditions are linked to health and diseases. To articulate the Oromo social problems and provide extensive solutions these fields of studies need to work together. Indeed cooperation among these scholars can have synergetic effects.

Clearly, the Abyssinian colonial agenda wouldn't have started if the European empire builders had not supported it. Colonialism and the problems it has brought would have been ended if the idea and ideologies that promote injustice and inequality had been successfully challenged. As we have seen recently at Columbia University, Euro-American academic institutions are still providing forums for dictators who are driven by their ethnic/racial superiority theories. Therefore, OSA needs to further deconstruct the colonial and racial theories and practices. We need to show both the Euro-American policy makers and their academic institutions that what they are doing is inconsistent with their own moral and ethical standards.

The complexities of problems that the Oromo people face necessitate widening our scope and deeply examining what colonialism has done to the Oromo people and what the Oromo people should do to end it. This reality necessitated OSA a) to recruit more members b) to organize the database of Oromo scholars and scholars who are engaged in Oromo studies. Using this opportunity I would like to ask OSA members and other concerned citizens to play your part in achieving these goals.

For OSA members the future is bright and the time ahead of us could be an opportunity where we can to live up to our potential and produce knowledge that challenges the idea and ideologies that promote racial, national or ethnic domination and facilitate change which advances the empowerment of people and contributes to bringing justice to the Horn of Africa. May Waaqa (God) help us in researching and bringing tangible change to this noble cause.

Thank you

Begna F. Dugassa, PhD

## “ THE WISDOM OF WORKING TOGETHER INSTEAD OF WORKING AGAINST EACH OTHER”

Mohammed Hassen, Associate Professor, Ph.D.

The danger that hangs over all independent Oromo organizations, the nation of Oromia and its environment is real. There is no one out there to protect our people, their organizations, their environment and their future, but themselves. They could do that only if they are united. United people can achieve anything. As their children in the Diaspora, we also need to be united. However, sadly there is alarming increase in bitterness among the Oromo Diaspora political factions. I do not remember any time when so much bitterness has engulfed the mind, the body, and the soul of those who are engaged in factional conflicts. Those who are involved in factional conflicts may not realize that bitterness is the cancer that kills the spirit of cooperation and turns brothers and sisters against each other. Bitterness pollutes the mind, and the pollution of the mind is inseparable from the pollution of the human spirit; and nurturing cooperation and unity is inseparable from the preservation of the generous human spirit.

Those who are involved in factional conflicts should marshal the moral courage for ending their factional conflicts, which does not benefit a single faction. Working together does not spring up organically. It is brought about by people and their organizations. Those who have concern for the freedom and independence of our people must make decisive choice for working together instead of working against each other. Working together is crucial for having clear insight into the complex dangers that hang over the future of our people. Those of us who are lucky enough to live beyond the brutal arm of the Ethiopian state have moral obligation and national duty for working together in the interest of our people and their future. It is only if Oromo political factions are able to work with each other that that they can make tangible contribution to the struggle for freedom of our people. It is only if they work together that they can take the cause of our people seriously and that others can also take them seriously. It is only if they cooperate and work together that they can learn from one another's successes and failures, share experience and organizational skills and turn our weakness into our strength. Above all, it is only if they cooperate and work together that they will be able to be an effective voice of our people in the Diaspora. If they work together, they will be able to handle themselves, rise above petty recriminations, and be able to settle misunderstandings and differences of opinion through dialogue and open-minded discussion and constructive criticism.

We gain a great deal from constructive criticism as individuals, as a group and as an organization. Constructive criticism is a mirror that shows us our weaknesses that have to be transformed into strengths. However, when we criticize, we should not let our imagination take a better hold of us and turn differences of opinion into polemical diatribe. We must realize that conflict is inherent in and is an integral part of any organization as it is part and parcel of life itself. Any living and functioning organization is bound to have conflicts; only dead organizations have no conflict. Any Oromo organization, including the Oromo studies Association (OSA), as a living and functioning organization had and will have conflicts in the future. The important question is not why did the conflict arise, but rather, how was it resolved? What makes a real difference between individuals, groups, nations, countries, and organizations is how they handle the situation of conflict. Fifteen years ago, I wrote the following words about misunderstanding and conflicts within OSA.

We must realize that there are always differences of opinion within a living organization. OSA as a young, dynamic organization had and will have its share of misunderstandings, conflicts, and ideological clashes among its members. For us, this is like a family quarrel. Members of a family may quarrel on some issues and yet remain a healthy, functional family. For us, OSA members are members of one family who agree to disagree on some issues and still work together. OSA members realize that the things they agree upon are far greater and more important to the cause of our people. OSA members always look at the broader picture on all issues rather than a single perspective.” (OSA newsletter, Vol. III, No. 4, February-March 1995, p. 3)

Despite the problems it faced over the years, OSA has not only survived but it is flourishing, which is refreshing, uplifting, exhilaration and truly exciting for those who are committed to the expansion of knowledge about every aspect of the nation of Oromia. It took many years for OSA to get where it is today. It has a bright future. More than simply a scholarly organization on paper, OSA has established Oromo Studies on a more reliable and lasting foundation. In 2010 and 2011 alone, under its capable and energetic Editor outstanding editor- Professor Ezekiel Gebissa, OSA most likely, will publish two or three issues of the Journal of Oromo Studies. This is truly a remarkable achievement for small scholarly organization. In scholarship, like in everything else in life, you harvest what you have planted. There is no short cut to excellence and increased scholarly productivity. As the Chinese saying goes, “the journey of a thousand miles begins with a single step.” OSA had taken that first step and we know we have a long ways to go. But one thing is for certain. Oromo studies will never be marginalized again. Scholarly productivity of OSA reflects the maturity of our scholarly organization. Though what has been achieved so far is very modest, we must rejoice in our limited accomplishments and take satisfaction in the positive strides which OSA has made in the past 24 years, in picking up

light from the cause for which our people have been dying and generate a glow in international community about the justness and sacredness of that cause.

Finally, at this critical time in the life of our nation, OSA members must double and triple their efforts at encouraging other Oromo organizations to work together, instead of working against each other. The short and long term result of working against each other will only nurture the cancer that eats the spirit of cooperation and unity among the Oromo Diaspora. Let us do everything humanly possible to join together and work as a supportive team. However, if temporarily we may not be able to work together let us work towards that goal. Remember what Oliver Wendell Holmes once said: “What lies behind us and what lies before us are tiny matters compared to what lies within us.” Let us change from inside out instead of expecting change from the other side alone. Let us not look for enemies where none exist. Let us listen to each other instead of shouting at each other. Let us use decent language when we address differences of opinion. Abusing language is not a mark of maturity; on the contrary, it is an expression of poverty of spirit and lack of human decency. Let us appreciate the little things that we are able to do today and aim and act for achieving greater things tomorrow. If there are areas where we do not agree, let us agree to disagree. Differences of opinion are very healthy. Let us spare no energy to caution patience, tolerance, moderation, and understanding. Let us listen to one another and value each other’s contributions. If we work together diligently giving our time, talents and resources, we will be assured of making meaningful contribution to the cause for which our people are dying daily.

## RESEARCH DIRECTIONS

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### A. Introduction

We can't solve problems by using the same kind of thinking we used when we created them. Albert Einstein

Knowledge is a socially constructed phenomenon. Its validity depends on the social location of the knower. As Einstein's words suggest, researching and understanding the social, economic, political, and environmental as well as public health problems of Oromia, from the Euro-Abyssinian framework of thought would not provide comprehensive solutions and facilitate changes. Knowledge produced from such research would undermine the need of the Oromo people. In deed, one of the underlying reasons for conflict between colonizers and the colonized relates to the validity of knowledge. People usually differ in the manner in which they collect data, store, process the information, understand the problem and address them. Twenty-five years ago, when the Oromo Studies Association (OSA) was formed, it was in understanding that the Euro-Abyssinian discourse that legitimized the illegitimate colonial power relations between Abyssinia and Oromia was not in a position to understand the needs, and the aspiration of Oromo people and facilitate change for the people to empower themselves. Hence, it is intended to learn from the past, question colonial agenda, challenge colonial discourses and promote Oromo centric knowledge. Although OSA successfully challenged the colonial agenda and discourse, there are many social, economic, political, cultural and environmental issues that still require further investigation. Some issues are more urgent than others.

Research priorities reflect the interests of its researchers, affiliation of scholars and the community the researchers represent. As with all other researchers and policy makers, my social location influences my actions or lack actions. Therefore, before I embark in the direction I would like to lead the Oromo Study Association (OSA), I want my social location to be known.

I was born and raised in a Waqefaata family. As Orthodox Christianity was imposed upon the Oromo people, my family, which resisted the imposition took me through the Oromo traditional religious ceremony known as *amachisa* before I was put through baptism into Orthodox Christianity. In the *amachisa*, I got the name Tolera (pleased to *Waaqa –God, in Oromo*). In the Orthodox Church baptism, they gave me the name Gebre Giyorgis (*the slave of George in Amaharic*).

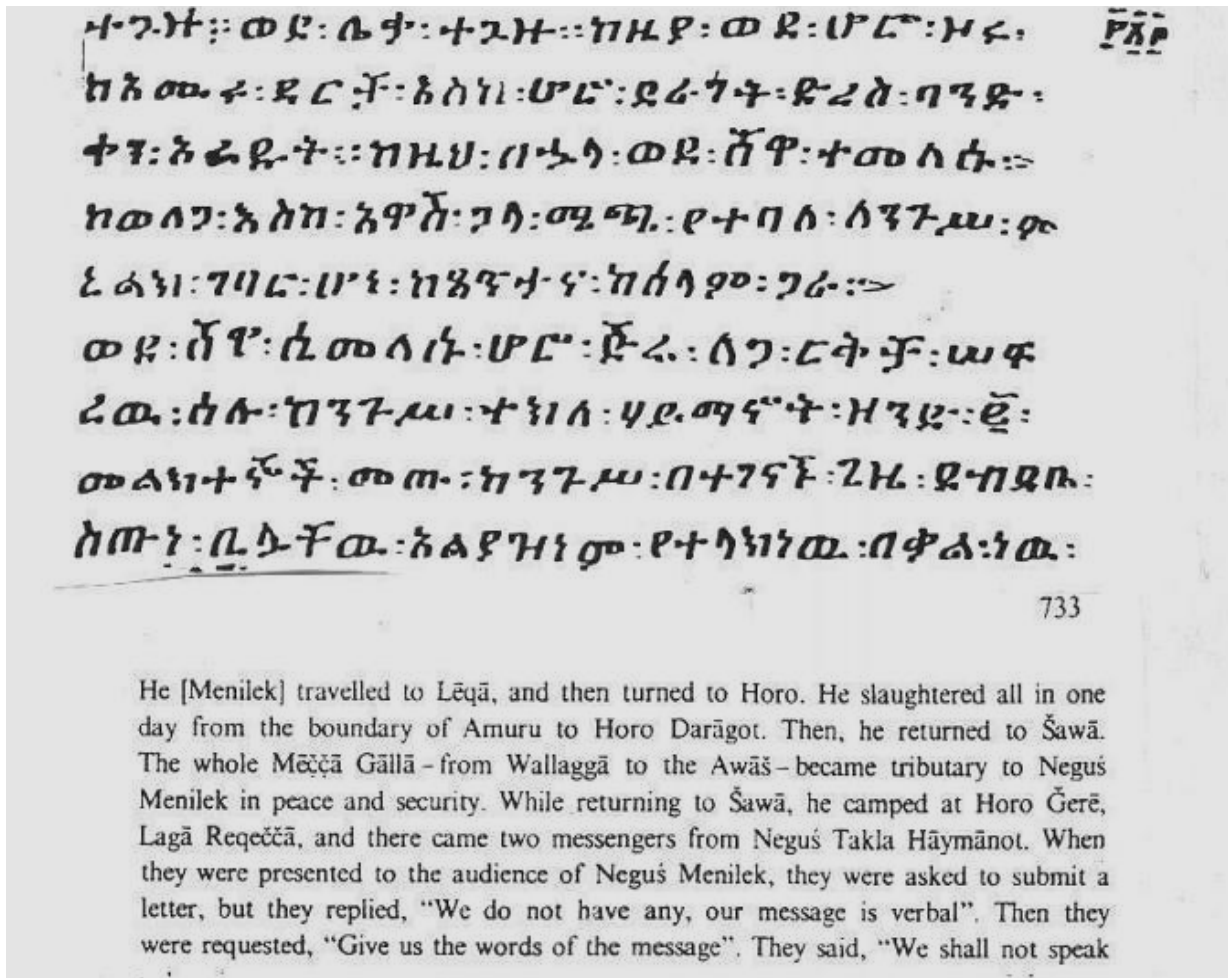


Figure 1. Document recorded by Asma-Giyorgis ([1910]1987) and translated into English by Bairu Tafla.

As the document states ``he slaughtered all in one day`` it describes the killings that the Abyssinian king Menilek had committed in my home village and district. In the document, the word Lega Reqecca refers to Riqicha River (half a mile away from my home) and Horo Daragooti is the sub clan in which my father’s line identifies themselves. Horo Gere refers to part of the Daragooti’s land named by his wife Jaree, which includes the Fincahaa town.

Individuals who resisted the Abyssinian king were either killed or lost their land. Some of those who simply surrendered were allowed to keep their land. My community members are among those who have lost their ancestral land to the Abyssinian colonial settlers known as Melkegna. I was born and raised into a family and community who were forced to share their harvest with Abyssinian landlords. My family were categorized as Gabars –serfs. I have witnessed the impacts of serfdom since

my childhood. My academic journey has taken me into both life sciences and social sciences. I lived and worked in different countries. As an undergraduate student I lived in the former USSR. After that, as a refugee, I lived in Greece and then settled in Canada. My early work experiences include being a laboratory technician and a researcher in clinical sciences. On the other hand, my training and research experiences in social sciences exposed me to the theories of equity, diversity, social justice and public health. This has prepared me to understand the complexities of our social relations and their effects. All of these tremendously influence my thinking.

I recently visited Oromia- (Horo-Guduru Wollega zone and Abayi-Comaan County). In Abayi-Comaan and surrounding regions, the water reserve for Finchaha and Nashe Hydroelectric Power flooded thousands of hectares of grazing and farmlands and form a man made Lake. The nearby Sugar Cane farm for the Finchaha sugar factory took over thousands of hectares of hunting, bee raising, farming and grazing lands. Interestingly, although sugar is produced in this county the local people are not allowed to buy it. Instead, the sugar is shipped to Finfinee and the local businessmen and woman have to go to Finfine to buy it and sell it to the local people. This makes the price of sugar higher in this area compared to Finfinee. Traditionally the highlands of Abayi-Comaan County were a malaria free zone; now it has become malaria prone zone. These dams have played a major role in the malaria epidemic. There are no hospitals in the county that care for the sick.

The water reserves on Fincahaa, Amarti and Nashe Rivers are mostly on marshy lands. In this marshy land, when the water reserve increases the grasses that grow there float on the top. Because the grazing land was taken away by the water reserve, there are shortages of grazing lands. The Oromo farmers are forced to let their cows graze on the floating grasses on the marshy land. One day when the cows were grazing on the floating grass on Fincaha Lake, the wind blew the grass away from the mainland. The farmers tried to bring back their cows. The wind was unusually powerful and it took away two children who were looking after the cows and three adults and about 40 cows. These cows and the people stayed on the floating grass for several days and finally arrived on the main land in Guduru district, which is on the other side of the lake. The cows were partly in the water for several days and during this time the people were without food. When this all happened, there were no institution that came to rescue them. Do the hydroelectric power company that took the grazing and farmlands have any responsibility for the social and economic damages it causes? In countries where human rights are respected and where people democratically elect their policy makers, the answer is would be ``yes`` but in Ethiopia this basic necessity is missing.

In Abayi-Comaan County, mostly I stayed in Finchaha town. Being in town I able to talk to both the local people who came to the town for the market (from Guduru & Horoo) and to foreign labourers such as Chinese and Indians. In Abayi-Comaan County, I visited several peasant associations. I also visited the nearby towns – Hoomi<sup>1</sup> & Shamboo. In addition, I got the opportunity to talk to individuals in Gabatee, Wayyu, Gedoo, Gudar and Ambo towns. I stayed a night in Ginci and spent the whole day in Jaldu – Gojo town. I stayed a night in Walisso. On my journeys, I used rented cars and other times I used public transportation.

On my trip my two children accompanied me, age 12 & 14 and they made their own observations and raised several interesting issues that probably I would have missed. For example, in our first two nights in Finfine we stayed in a hotel located about a mile away from an Orthodox Church compound. At around 5:00 AM a loud prayer from the church waked us up. We also experienced the same thing in Finchahaa and Walisso. In the view of my children the very loud prayer services violated their right to rest. It reminded me of my previous experiences in the former USSR, where radio was used to indoctrinate people with communist ideas.

The other shocking point for my children was the number of homeless children on the streets of Finfine. For them it was shocking to see poor mothers sitting on the muddy and dirty streets with two or more children and begging for piece of bread. Indeed, my children insisted on leaving Finfine to avoid seeing homeless children and the smelling of the city. From my experience I knew there were many beggars in Finfine, but the number of street children and beggars are now beyond my comprehension. Although my children had several vaccinations before we left for Oromia, my younger son got sick on the second day. I was forced to rush him to a private hospital known as Girum Hospital. As very often happens, the Abyssinians gave an Amaharic name to my child and gave me a receipt with that name on it. Hoping to claim my expenses from insurance and show my dissatisfaction, I asked the hospital to produce a receipt in the true name of my son. When I brought the issue of the name change to the cashier, I assumed that they would apologise about it. However, the reaction I got was no different than the attitude of Abyssinians that I know two decades ago. Given that my child was critically dehydrated, I left behind the long-standing issues and directed my attention to helping him.

Hoping that things were different in the countryside and small towns we loaded our luggage into a Land Rover and headed to Western Oromia and left Finfine in the early morning. As soon as they started to see in the distance the mountains and the valleys, my children started to admire the beauty of

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<sup>1</sup> It is in the Hoomi town where the Amarti water reserve goes through underground canal and flow to Finchahaa Lake.

Oromia. However, it did not take them long to realize that soil erosion was widespread. Many of the mountains and the valleys had few or no trees. Soon they started to ask questions. Their questions included: why did the Oromos allow such widespread erosion, why they did not plant trees in the valleys and on the mountains? My answer was that the Oromo people's culture was one of caring for the environment. However, given that the Oromo are not entitled to decide on their affairs, they are denied the right to develop leadership that could maintain and flourish that culture. I explained to them that to solve any social and environmental problems, societies need to be empowered with regard to its own affairs. If they are empowered on their affairs they develop a leadership. Strong leadership can develop if there is accountability and responsibility for the actions or inaction of the leaders. Strong leadership can be developed if there is a strong bond between the people and the leaders. Before, I could finish my talking, they had brought up issues surrounding leadership in Oromia, which I decided to avoid answering. Although our conversation was in English language and no one understood us, I decided to avoid the dialogue on this matter so as not to interrupt them making their own observations and not to give them a sense of freedom in talking about politics freely.

We spend an hour in Ambo and continued our journey further in the westward. Soon after we passed Gudar our driver said ``Now we are going to climb a mountain and showed us the hill ahead of us. My children saw not only the hill ahead of us but also the hills and valleys from both side of the road- (highway). At that time we were finishing the Bada-Daree (semi-highland) region and starting to go up to Badaa (highland regions). We heard that there were highway robbers, and we had been told to leave the highlands of Calaiyaa in daylight, but with no break, we continued our journey to the cold highlands of Caliyaa. Probably the coldest place in that area is Dalati. Indeed, when we arrived there one of my children said ``I am in Africa and it is supposed to be hot, but I am freezing`. It was the rainy season and it was truly cold and everybody was hiding inside and we could not make many observations about the people.

As we finished the highlands of Caliyaa, and started to slowly go down to Jimaa Raree County, our luggages fall off from our Land Rover. To load back our luggage we got out of the car; and soon children who were half naked, barefooted and malnourished who are indeed suffering from severe protein-energy deficiency also known as marasmus surrounded us. These impoverished and pallid children asked for small changes. I knew Jimaa Raree and Jimaa Ganati as one of the fertile land in that region. When I saw impoverished children I was shocked. I gave a small amount of money to my children to give it to those children. When my children asked them why they needed that money their answer was to buy books, exercise books, pens, pencils and school uniforms. After we left the area, my

children asked how they could survive with such cold, half naked and bare footed. My children were surprised that those impoverished children were thinking of buying books before they even had proper clothing. My children realised that we were getting close to my home village and started to visualise about the upbringing of their father and they started to ask if I used to go like them half naked and bare footed. I answered them that we were poor but we were not as poor as these children.

Next to Jimaa Raree is the Guduru district. In the mid 1800`s several European writers who visited this area testified that the local inhabitants were freedom loving people. Even today they are truly freedom-loving people. Not only that, they are an equitable society. In Guduru on both side of the roads my children observed children looking after the cows with *baxiyaa* on their heads and back to protect themselves from the rain and wind. At that time, a paper written by one of my Canadian colleague a researcher on children`s rights came to my mind. The paper was intended to help children and criminalize those parents who allow child labour. Although in principle I agree with the author, I told the person that it is worthwhile address the conditions that force parents to use the labour of their children. As I saw the number of cows that a child looks after, I saw a real change. In my time, there were only few children who were privileged enough to not have to look after cows. Most of the children looked after no less than twenty cows. Now days, looking after cows have become a privilege. Children who look after cows and have a cup of milk are the privileged ones.

In Guduru we continued our journey non-stop until we passed Gabate. As we continued our journey, we passed through a land allocated for animal husbandry research. This gave me some hope and relief- seeing that someone is trying to improve the ways things are done. At this time we were not far away from the border between Guduru and Horo—the Fincahaa River. The only crossing point for the Fincahaa River is on the dam. I knew this place very well. However, when we arrived I could not believe that this was the place I knew-deforested. Soon after we crossed the bridge or the dam there is a check up point and they asked us to come out of the car and show our identification. Assuming that the person was an Oromo I said to him in Afaan Oromoo ``here are the identification papers of three people``. When I realized that he did not understand, I spoke to him in Amaharic and gave him our passports obviously written in English. He looked at the cover page of the passport and looked at me and let us go. Probably he thought that I was one of the higher officials of Oromia.

Understanding the complex challenges facing the Oromo people requires a comprehensive approach. The major challenge that confronts the Oromo people is definitely the colonial power relation. Although the big picture should be the self-determination and the empowerment of the Oromo

people, we need to ask several specific questions and communicate our finding with our people in writing and orally. Here, I narrowed the issues to the most important and urgent ones.

### **Objectives:**

The objective of this proposed research direction is to suggest the OSA members and other scholars the type of research questions they need to ask and the framework of thought they need to use in framing their questions, in collecting and analysing the data and:

- Identify and clarify the core reasons that are implicated to the social, economic, cultural and political problems in Oromia and surrounding regions and come up with working solutions.
- Name why the supports that the international organizations provide to the Ethiopian government have failed to bring real change in the lives of people in the Ethiopian empire and produce data, provide reasons for the need for a paradigm shift of thinking.
- Predict and anticipate emerging social, economic, cultural and political problems and inform the public about their findings
- Generate knowledge on the ways the violations of the collective rights of the Oromo people are implicated to the social, economic, cultural and political problems of Oromia, and make use of this knowledge to promote the empowerment of people.
- Develop a research method and methodology that challenges the idea and ideologies that promote inequality and pave the way for an alternative theory and practices.
- Propose a different framework of thought in understanding the social problems in the Ethiopian empire and the Horn of Africa.
- Raise awareness among the Oromos and other peoples that they are entitled to determine their own social, economic, cultural and political affairs.
- Select the best ways of addressing the problems the Oromo people face.
- Inform the International institutions and global policy makers why they need to think from the framework of human rights, social justice and equity rather than profit and control in mind.

## B. RESEARCH AS KNOWLEDGE CONSTRUCTION

Knowledge is power and it is one of the areas, that colonizers and the colonized contest. Research is a tool by which societies understand their problems and find solutions. In the course of solving social, economic and health problems all societies conduct research. This means knowingly or unknowingly all societies conduct research and use such knowledge for the betterment of their members. However, the colonial discourse suggests that one group of people are knowledge producers and others are consumers. Such discourse categorized the empire builders as the civilized and the colonized people as the uncivilized. It was such a biased discourse that drew the map of the Abyssinian empire, which was based on the legend of the empire of Prester John – a map that over exaggerated the Abyssinian territories (stretching them from Southern Egypt to the present state of South Africa). This map denied many African people their indigenous status; and- in the minds of Abyssinian elite has created the desire to colonize. Such racist beliefs influenced the European empire builders to provide firearms and military personnel to Abyssinia leaders to colonize the Oromo people and other indigenous Africans. Such a framework of thought misinforms researchers and policy makers, and hinders them understanding the core problems in the region. For example, when people die from starvation, when easily preventable infectious diseases kill, and micro and macro nutrient deficiencies mentally and physically incapacitate millions of people in Oromia, colonial knowledge informs Global policy makers to provide relief food and life-extending medications rather than facilitating changes, empowering the people and addressing the root causes of these problems. Oromo scholars need to further expand the scope of their research and produce knowledge that promote change, facilitates conditions in which the people can empower themselves to solve their own problem and bring about just world in the Horn of Africa.

Given that knowledge is power, research can be the tool to empower the society. Research is used to construct knowledge of the past, present and the future. Knowing the past and present is essential for leaders if they are to envision the future. Conducting basic research, identifying the social problems and developing tools needed in addressing them and delivering the tools to those who are in need are the core functions of effective research. Research has its base in a worldview of the researcher and thus, what to study and how to perform the study is determined by the social location of the researcher. Thus, choosing appropriate research frameworks and methodologies are essential to understand the core problem and facilitate change.

### **C. UNITY, DIVERSITY AND EQUITY AMONG THE OROMO PEOPLE**

Abyssinia colonized the Oromo people in a war of attrition. The Oromo people would have not have succumbed to the Abyssinian rule if they had stood in unison. The current generation needs to realize that the Oromo people can empower themselves if they stand together. It should be clear that the Ethiopian government would do any thing to maintain the colonial power relations. One of the strategies they have used and are using is to divide the Oromo people along clan, religious and regional lines. Education can be a colonial tool. A Brazilian philosopher, Freire (1976) in his book *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, writes that oppressed people are trained to think with the minds of the oppressors. According to him oppressed people very often internalise the image, view and the aspiration of the oppressors. Oromo politicians who are trying to use clans, religion and regions, as a ways to internally compete with each other should think whether or not they are in fact fulfilling the aspirations of their oppressors.

The experiences of the Somali people suggest that having the same religion and speaking the same language does not necessarily unify the people. OSA scholars need to openly engage not only in challenging the colonial agenda but also promoting diversity and equity among the Oromo people. OSA scholars need to redefine the concept of equity and diversity from an Oromo perspective. In their research OSA members need to encourage the principles of equity and diversity so that the ideas and ideologies that promote it can be flourish and the needs and the aspirations of all members of the Oromo society is equally centred. The issue of unity should go hand in hand with diversity and equity. OSA scholars need to take a serious look at the ways the Oromo people can put their collective aspirations at the centre.

### **D. ACADEMIC FREEDOM AND SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY**

If we conceptualize that knowledge is socially constructed; it is clear that no member of a society has a monopoly on it. Researchers are entitled to raise issues that they think are important. Trying to control research questions would limit the knowledge construction. For example, from the European experience, when Galileo theorized that the sun was the centre of the universe, the Catholic Church condemned and sentenced him to death. However, several centuries after Galileo was put to death, the Catholic Church realized that it was wrong. The killing was committed to legitimize monolithic views. We also know that among Euro-American researchers the idea of academic freedom has been misused and, in the name of scientific research, racist views have been promoted. For example, the eugenic sciences were allowed to conduct research to improve the health status of the

white race and ignored the needs of other groups of people. We also know that more recently one of the TPLF researchers and a Professor at Mekele University produced his research findings in the form of a book (see OSA News letter). It is clear that the author framed his research questions, collected the data and interpreted them in a racist theoretical framework. Therefore, although I encourage OSA members to vigorously ask all research questions that are relevant to the Oromo people at the same time full-fill their social responsibilities.

Let me put the issue of academic freedom in perspective. When Obbo Leenco Lata's book, the Ethiopian state at the crossroads: decolonization and democratization or ...was published, there was an uproar among the Oromo communities. Although I have some resentment to the framework in which the book was written, the author has provided us very valuable data. If the Oromo public only allows those discourses with which they agree, it will lead to society becoming stagnant rather than dynamic and vibrant. This would not be in the interests of the Oromo people. Therefore, whether or not we agree with the research question the person asks, the researcher's right to ask any questions should be respected. I promote the principles of academic freedom and social responsibility.

Many of OSA members are already members of several academic institutions. In addition, the OSA has adopted the culture of working with non-Oromo Scholars. The participation of scholars from the Sidama, Ogden and other on OSA conferences is clear evidence of this. I believe it is the time for the OSA to be proactive and expand the dialogue to all other scholars in the Horn of Africa.

## **E. GLOBALIZATION**

Globalization is a powerful force and information technology is speeding up the process of globalization. For the people under colonial rule, globalization may have positive and negative impacts. The Oromo people need to learn to make use of the positive aspects of globalization and minimize its negative effects. The OSA has an obligation to cultivate young scholars who can think globally and act locally and bring issues that are relevant to the Oromo people to the global community. Especially I encourage those scholars who are directly involved in teaching and research to give more attention in cultivating young scholars who can raise research issues that are relevant to the Oromo people.

On my recent visit to Oromia, I saw several Chinese and Indians in a hotel in Fincaha. I found out that they were working in the Fincaha valley. Interestingly most of them work as labourers, which the local people can do. Why is it that the Ethiopian government allows foreign citizens to take job opportunities away from the Oromo people; is this a future trend or an isolated event? What can be done to stop such activities? Would this happen in the Tigray region?

One of the interesting episodes that I learned from my conversation with people in Ginci is about labour dispute with an Indian company. Few years ago an Indian company built a paper-producing factory in the town. The company pays 8 Birri or about \$0.50 per day to its labourers. When I asked them how these people survive, I was told that they survive depending on their family members. At one point, the workers consulted the local administrators and decided to strike hoping to force the company to pay them more. The company, instead of negotiating with the workers they hired new labourers. The local politicians tried to involve and settle the dispute but they failed. The higher authority that were probably bribed by the company, allowed the labourers to lose their job for demanding higher payment to their labour.

## **F. CULTURE**

What makes the Oromo people distinct from others is their culture. The Oromo culture is all about the knowledge and wisdom, passed on from one generation to the next. Some scholars see culture as analogous to a jacket – it can be used to protect a person from extreme heat and cold. This analogy suggests that if the Oromo people lose their culture they will be exposed to different types of harms and risks. If they lose their culture they can easily be controlled, exploited and assimilated. Hence, one of the ways the Oromo people can resist the colonial agenda and empower themselves is to protect and develop the Oromo culture.

Given that cultural assimilation is one of the colonial agendas, OSA members need to take this issue seriously. It is a time to take a close look at the case of individuals like Gobana Dance and Ganame Dinagde aka Habte Giyorgis Dinagde; if they were the victim of the Abyssinian cultural assimilation who were indoctrinated into the Abyssinian culture, or simple traitors. The OSA cheep and paves the direction by which the Oromo people can control their educational curricula and cultural affairs. The OSA must give more attention to the ways that colonial formal and informal education is used to indoctrinate the Oromo students and used to divide and control them. OSA needs to play a major role in the preservation of the Oromo culture and knowledge.

As I mentioned above, my baptismal name is Gebre Giyorgis; when I learned the meaning of the name, several questions emerged in my mind. First, why was the Orthodox Christianity imposed upon the Oromo people?) What is the evidence that Orthodox Christianity is ethically superior to the Waqefaata? Why did they have to give me an Amaharic name? Why is it that they chose to give me the name Gebre Giyorgis, rather than Haile Giyorgis (Power of George), Wolde Giyorgis (the son of George)? Obviously this did not happen by accident. As it was in the past, today several religious

institutions (different sects of Christianity and Islam) are registered and they legally function in Oromia. However, the Indigenous Oromo religion is still legally banned and it is not allowed to promote the philosophy of Waqefaata among its followers. Given that Waqefaata has no legal status, some criminally motivated individuals use this opportunity to defame and distort its teachings. For example, some individuals take bribes and misuse the property of the members. The Ethiopian government does not see any wrong if individuals use the Waqefaata religion as a tool to manipulate and exploit its members. Denial of legal status and absence of check and balance in this Oromo institution contributing to weaken Waqefaata. For example, in my recent visit to Oromia I found out that most of my family members have been converted to protestant Christianity.

Among the cities I have visited, Waliso is the cleanest one. In Waliso city in the name of development, the Ethiopian government allowed the killing of Odda tree that has historical and spiritual significance to the Oromo people. To make a building for a Wagagen Bank, they killed the thousand years old Odda tree with chemicals and destroyed the Oromo sacred site. The motive to kill the century old Odda tree is compounded with the Abyssinian economic interests and their racist religious view that has no respect to the Oromo worldview. OSA scholars need to make a close look at the impacts of the denial of Waqefaata a legal status, the destruction of the Oromo sacred sites and such religious conversions. I also call upon social activists and human right advocates taking this issue seriously.

## **G. ECONOMY**

### **1. LAND GRABBING**

As I mentioned above, my family lost their ancestral lands to Abyssinian landlords. If the 1975 land reform had not occurred, I would not have finished high school let alone go to University. Therefore, I see the issue of land grabbing not simply as an issue of property ownership but as an issue of life and death. The issue of land is about whether or not one can have access to bread or instead slowly die from poverty and hunger. It is whether or not one can educate his or her children or keep them illiterate. It is about whether or not one can live in dignity, providing the basic necessities to family members or begging for a piece of bread or waiting for the good will of international donors. OSA members need to take this issue seriously and take a close look at the social, economic, political, cultural and environmental impacts of land grabbing.

It should be clear that when the Tigray People's Liberation Front (TPLF) brought the Oromo land into the global market; it was intended to use the opportunity that the Globalization brings to the

empire builders. TPLF sell Oromo lands to foreign investors having in mind that if their power is threaten to win the support of the investors and through them the interference of foreign countries. In doing that TPLF is intended to present it self that they are the defender of foreign interest. Oromo intellectuals need to make use of the information technology and expose the cruelty behind land grabbing. For example, on my recent visit to Oromia I noticed how wide the flower farming has spread. On my ways to and from Ambo and Waliso I saw thousands people walking on both sides of the road to go to work or going home from the flower farm. The number of flower farms and the people on these roads indicate the number of people who became landless.

## **H. LEADERSHIP**

One of the methods used by Abyssinians to control and exploit the Oromo people was by denying them leadership. Leadership sets vision, sets direction and clarifies what is important and what is not. In its turn, vision is about collecting data, analysing it, identifying the risks and opportunities and setting strategic action plans. Society with no leadership is like a society with no vision. To empower the Oromo people and improve their social status, development of a strong leadership is essential. Therefore, one of the research questions that OSA scholars should ask is how to develop a strong Oromo leadership and nurture the existing leadership.

One of the major reasons why colonizers cannot maintain their power is that the people do not trust them. At the same time, the reasons why these less organized, with fewer armed forces successfully challenge the colonizers is they are able to win the trust of the people. Leadership that has the trust of the people can transform the whole society. Leadership can win the trust of people if there is a flow of information. Leadership and information are intertwined; thus, the role of OSA in the development of Oromo leadership can be enormous.

Let me bring up an issue I observed in my recent visit. When I was in Fincahaa town, an anthrax infection had killed several cows both in Guduru and Horoo – Abay Chomen County and many farmers were worried about losing theirs. The dead bodies of these cows were not buried and as a result hyenas that ate the dead cows also died. In Fincahaa surprisingly there were many dogs on the street and most of them have no owners. These dogs might eat the dead cows and bring the anthrax infection into town. Not only that, in Fincahaa, if you want to shop for meat you need to look for the freshly killed cow lung hanging in front of the shop. This is a tradition in Fincahaa. In the past, there were not many people who understood about microbiology. No one has challenged this shop practice or made an effort to change such a culture. However, nowadays there are many men and women from this area

who can understand the risk factor associated with this tradition but they are not in a position to influence policy makers. If the purpose of leadership is to envision, identify opportunities and risks, it is clear that the absence of leadership has put the whole society at risk of anthrax.

## **I. PUBLIC HEALTH**

The health status of any society is directly linked to the social status of the group. If the group is marginalized and oppressed, their social, economic and health needs are always compromised. If the group is empowered they can better understand their needs and act in a culturally acceptable and financially feasible manner. The current public health conditions in Oromia represent the political status of the Oromo people. For example, on my recent visit I noticed the following public health problems. First, iodine deficiency is more widespread than I have assumed in the past. Second, some of HIV positive individuals never visit health centres, which suggest that the prevalence of HIV/AIDS is widespread in the countryside of Oromia. Third, the Oromia region is extensively farmed and chemical fertilizer and herbicides are widely used. The fertilizer that is widely used is urea. Very often the fertilizers used are washed away by erosion and go into nearby rivers and lakes. Most Oromo people have no access to clean water; as a result, they are conditioned to drink polluted water. In addition, some chemicals create conditions for the growth of microorganisms. In turn, this potentially increases the number of pathogenic microorganisms in water. To establish these hypotheses, Oromo scholars need to collect data and identify ways of reducing and preventing such risks.

### **1. CLEAN WATER**

Improved water quality is essential to bring personal and community sanitation. Improvement in personal hygiene helps to reduce the spread of water and food-related diseases, which are currently widespread. Lack of improved water supply leads to several diseases such as cholera, diarrhoea, viral hepatitis A, dysentery and typhoid, which are transmitted by drinking contaminated water. For example, the literature on HIV/AIDS research evidently suggests that HIV does not kill people. People who live with HIV/AIDS die of opportunistic microorganisms. However, not enough efforts are made to provide clean water for the general public and for HIV/AIDS positive individuals. While opportunistic microorganisms kill thousands of HIV/AIDS patients every day, the Ethiopian government allows ponds, spring waters, rivers and lakes to be polluted. To improve public health conditions in Oromia it is essential to make clean water available to everyone. The international

organizations are not doing enough to challenge the Ethiopian government's social policy. We need to ask where is the outrage from international organizations? Where are the actions taken to provide clean water?

One of the issues the OSA scholars need to take a look at is the Ethiopian food security policy and to examine if it is framed from an Abyssinian or an Oromo perspective and analyse the impacts of such a policy. For the TPLF government, their major objective is to guarantee food security for their people. In order to achieve food security, the TPLF government forces the Oromo farmers to intensively use fertilizers and selected seeds. The widespread use of fertilizers and herbicides has polluted rivers, ponds and spring waters on which the Oromo people depend for water. On the other hand, Tigray is a dry, rocky and mountainous region. The yearly rainfall level there is much smaller than the Oromia region. This makes the intensity of soil erosion widespread in Oromia. This means the damages fertilizers and herbicides bring to the Tigray region are minimal. The research questions that OSA members ask should include whether or not the idea of food security is framed from an Oromo perspective. Is it worthwhile polluting the rivers, ponds and spring waters to bring about food security? Would it be possible to guarantee food security to the Oromo people without polluting rivers, lakes, ponds, and spring water? What are the health burdens of polluting rivers, ponds, and spring waters?

## **2. FOOD SECURITY**

Food is one of the basics needed for the survival of human beings. According to the Food Agricultural Organization (FAO), food security exists when all people, at all times, have physical, social and economic access to sufficient, safe and nutritious foods to meet their dietary needs and food preferences to maintain active and healthy life style. Although the issue of food security was not a major problem in the past, nowadays it is becoming a very serious matter in Oromia. For example, in the Oromo language the word ``kadhachu` means worshipping God or begging someone. Given that there were no beggars, there was no differentiation between these two words. When I was young there was only one beggar in the whole Abay-Chomen County. Now you will find at least one beggar on the street of Fincahaa town every 50 meters.

Because food is one of the basic human needs, if these needs are not fulfilled people lose their dignity and may become involved in disgraceful activities. In Oromia lack of food security is implicated to the

HIV/AIDS epidemic. In my previous work, I have shown that lack of food security drove many young Oromo girls and women to become involved in commercial sex, which exposed them to HIV/AIDS.

HIV virus disrupts the digestive and absorption process. HIV positive individuals also have higher metabolisms compared to other healthy individuals. Hence, the HIV positive individuals require more energy foods to maintain a healthy body weight and moderate physical activities. Literature in this area suggests that newly infected persons need 10% more energy and a person at a later stage of infection requires 30% more energy than a healthy person. The needs for children with HIV are even higher - 100% or more. This makes food security very challenging among the HIV/AIDS patients. International institutions are providing a small amount of food for their survival. Other poor men, women and children who have no access to adequate food can see that the foods that the HIV/AIDS patients receive are attractive. On my recent visit, one of the terrifying realities that I have heard about those who live in poverty is that several of them tried to bribe health professionals in order to get registered as HIV/AIDS patients. In reaction to this, the Ethiopian government set a policy that HIV tests that are done in a private hospitals or clinics are void and insist that tests should be done in two or more public hospitals. OSA members need to examine the impacts of widespread poverty and food insecurity.

Most of the Oromo people farm with oxen. However, in my recent observation I noticed that there are no grazing lands left and this has caused the people to lose their cattle. For example in my conversation with Oromo farmers I heard farmers saying that contemporary cows are not reproducing themselves and producing enough milk as they used to. Given that the people are denied a leadership, there are no visible activities from individuals that are intended to address this issue. From the government side, there is no plan to introduce a new technology. This suggests that the issue of poverty and food insecurity is something that is going to persist for some time. What can be done about it?

### **3. FOOD AID**

Food aid has indisputably saved the lives of millions of people. Central focus of food aid is helping the poor and vulnerable groups of people overcome food insecurity. If the objectives of food aid are to save lives, and reduce vulnerability, one can expect impartiality in its delivery. In my conversation with the HIV positive individuals in Oromia, I learned that many of the food aids are delivered through churches. Those churches primarily distribute these foods to their members or use it as a means to outreach others and make them the member of the church. Those HIV positive individuals who shared

their observations with me point their fingers to the Orthodox Church and Qalee Hiywot Church for such practice. If the story is true, the food aid is not doing what it is supposed to do. The research questions that OSA members should ask are, whether or not the objectives of the food aid was altered locally or if it was done in consultation with the international donors. OSA researchers need to look into the policy and practices of the donors and examine if the charity givers know about such discriminatory practices, if it is consistent with their initial objectives. In doing so OSA can raise awareness about such discriminatory practices and facilitate change.

One of the core principles of public health and global health is health promotion. According to the World Health Organization (WHO) the idea of health promotion is the process of enabling people to increase control over their health and its determinants, and thereby improve their health. In spite of this, the contemporary International organizations are preoccupied in delivering emergency foods and medical supplies- treating the symptoms rather than addressing the causes and enabling the people. What are the actions taken by the International organizations to enable people?

## **J. ENVIRONMENT & NATURAL RESOURCES**

On my recent visit to my home village I observed that the Riqicha Rivers-mentioned above, where I learned to swim is on verge of drying up and some other rivers completely dry during the dry seasons. Many thousand-year-old trees have disappeared or are disappearing. Harbu (*thick sycamore-like tree or ficus sur*), Birbissa (juniper tree or podocarpus falcatus) and Alaltu trees in particular are suffering. Deforestation is widespread; yet, for most of these disappearances, the local farmers are not responsible. The Ethiopian government is intensively involved in the destruction of the natural forests of Oromia. For example, in the Fincahaa valley, in the name of expanding the sugarcane farm, the Ethiopian government is massively cutting trees and then selling them in the market.

Let me bring one tangible example and illustrate the ways that Ethiopian government policy completely neglects the environment. One day when I was coming back to Fincahaa from a daylong visit to my high school in Shamboo, I noticed a man loading sugar under the seats of a minibus. Shamboo is about 50 KM away from Fincahaa and the sugar factory is in the Fincahaa valley and it is even farther away. In my mind it does not make sense when someone who lives in Fincahaa has to buy sugar from Shamboo. Out of curiosity I asked the person who sat next to me why he has to buy sugar from Shamboo when it is produced in Fincahaa. The answer I got was eye-opening. The sugar that is produced in Fincahaa is shipped to Finfinee and then from there it is either sold to business people or

distributed to their agencies in the capital of each zone. Which means the sugar that was produced in Finchahaa went to Finfinee and was then sent to Shamboo – the capital of the zone- and then returned back to Finchahaa. In doing so the truck that carries sugar to be consumed in Finchahaa has to pass through Finchahaa to deliver it in Finfinee and then from there it passes through Finchahaa to deliver it in Shamboo and then returns back to Finchahaa. How many litres of gas are used every year to transport the sugar back and fourth? What is the wisdom behind this?

I think environmental scientists need to look at the following questions:

1. What are the impacts of the widespread use of fertilizers and herbicides on century old trees?
2. Why those trees are rapidly disappearing than others?
3. What are the effects of Abyssinian and other cultural imposition and religious conversions in relation to the Oromo culture or caring for nature?
4. How can we make the Ethiopian government accountable to their environmental policies?
5. How can we mobilize Oromo society and the world community to combat environmental degradation in Oromia and surrounding regions?

## **K. MISCELLANEOUS TOPICS**

It is time for the OSA to be proactive and invite non-Oromos to participate at OSA conferences. For example, Abyssinian scholars who very often underline the need for Ethiopian unity probably they are realizing that there would not be unity without equity. Let me put this issue in context. On my recent trip to Oromia I flew from London England to Finfinee and back from Finfinee to London with the Ethiopian Airline. On the plane my children tried to practise their Oromo language skills. In both directions, they talked to about 10 hostesses. However, none of them was able to communicate in the Oromo language. When they found out that none of them was able communicate in Afaan Oromoo, my children used their basic statistical knowledge to determine whether or not the Ethiopian airline deliberately selected non-Oromo attendants or whether the choice was random. Therefore, for serious Abyssinian scholars there are opportunities to contribute their parts to bring just world in the Horn of Africa. Those who are interested in Ethiopian unity discourse can make a close look at the following topics.

1. Would it be possible to maintain Ethiopian unity without granting equity to different ethnic groups?

2. How do the Ethiopian government social policies favour one ethnic group compared to another—who is favoured and how we can make certain that there will be an equal distribution of privileges?
3. What are the discriminatory social and economic practices that feed the ethno-national conflicts and how we can address these in the future?
4. Would it be worthwhile for the marginalized groups of people to support the unity agenda without asserting their right to be equal?
5. Would it be possible to promote unity and diversity at the same time?
6. Is there a need to promote equity among different ethnic groups---if yes how?

## Dr. Paul Baxter's thank you note

October 20,, 2010

Dear Dr. Begna,

Dr. Paul Baxter, who was the recipient of the 2010 OSA Life Time Achievement Award, asked me to send the following brief thank note to you. Since his thank you note was sent to OSA members I hope you will include it in the next issue of OSA Newsletter. His short message follows.

Dear Dr. Begna,

Dr. Trevor Trueman has delivered the plaque, the gift and a copy of JOS Volume 17 number 1. I do not deserve such recognition but am delighted to receive it indeed. I am quite overcome by the kindness and generosity of jaala Oromo have been made happy. There is no way that I can thank people individually myself so, please act on my behalf and thank all OSA members for the award.

Sincerely,  
Paul Baxter

" Brief survey of Paul Baxter's contribution to Oromo studies"  
Mohammed Hassen

By any scholarly measure Dr. Paul Baxter's contribution to Oromo studies is impressive. Since the 1950s Dr. Paul Baxter participated in numerous international conferences, held in Africa, Europe, North America, Australia and Japan. He was among the first few intellectuals who put Oromo studies on the intellectual map of scholarly community during the time when Oromo studies was openly discouraged by the Ethiopian regime and despised, ignored neglected by Ethiopianist scholars.

Paul Baxter got his BA degree from Cambridge University and his Ph.D. from Oxford University. He studied social anthropology and spent two years( 1952 and 1953) among the Boran Oromo in Kenya. Of his extensive publications, let me selectively list only the following articles.

1. " The Social Organization of the [Oromo] of Northern Kenya" Ph.D. dissertation, Oxford University, 1954.
2. " Repetition in Certain Boran Ceremonies" In African Systems of Thought, ed. M.Fortes and G. Dieterlin, ( London: Oxford University Press for International African Institute, 1960), 64-78.
3. " Acceptance and Rejection of Islam among the Boran of the Northern Frontier District of Kenya" in Islam in Tropical Africa, edited by I.O. Lewis ( London: Oxford University Press, 1966), 233-250.
4. " Stock Management and the Diffusion of Property Rights among the Boran" In Proceedings of the Third International Conference of Ethiopian Studies, ( Addis Ababa: Institute of Ethiopian Studies, Haile Selassie I University, 1966), 116-127.
5. " Some Preliminary Observations on a type of Arssi Song" In Proceedings of the Third International Congress of Ethiopian Studies, ed. E. Cerulli ( Rome: 1972).

6. "Boran Age-Sets and Generation-set: Gada, a Puzzle or a maze?" In Age Generation and time: Some Features of East African Age Oroganisations, ed. P.T.W. Baxter and U. Almagor, ( London: C. Hurst, 1978), 151-182.

7." Ethiopia's Unacknowledged Problem: The Oromo", African Affairs, Volume 77, Number 208( 1978): 283-296.

This was the first major article that brought the plight and suffering of the Oromo to the attention of academic community. It is the work that is widely quoted. The Ethiopian Military regime was so angered by Dr. Paul Baxter's support for the Oromo cause, that he was banned from ever entry Ethiopia since 1978.

8. " Vercingetorix in Ethiopia: Some Problems Arising from Levine's inclusion of the Oromo in His Delineation of Ethiopia as a Culture Area"( with H. Blackhurst) Abbay, Volume 9 ( 1978), 159-166.

9. " Atete: A Congregation of Arssi Women" North East African Studies, Volume I ( 1979), 1-22.

10. Boran Age-Sets and Warfare", in Warfare among East African Herders, ed. D. Turton and K. Fukui, Senri Ethnological Studies, Number 3, Osaka: National Museum of Ethnology( 1979), 69-95.

11. " Always on the outside looking in: A view of the 1969 Ethiopian elections from a rural constituency" Ethnos, Number 45( 1980): 39-59.

12. " The Problem of the Oromo or the Problem for the Oromo" in Nationalism and Self-Determination in the Horn of Africa, ed. I.M. Lewis, ( London: Ithaca Press, 1983), 129-150.

13. " Butter for Barley and Barley for Cash: Petty Transactions and small Transformations in an Arssi Market" in Proceedings of Seventh Congress of Ethiopian Studies ( Lund: 1984), 459-472.

14. " The Present State of Oromo Studies: a Resume", Bulletin des Etudes africaine de l' Inalco, Vol. VI , Number 11( 1986): 53-82.

15. " Giraffes and Poetry: Some Observations on Giraffe Hunting among the Boran" Paiduma: Mitteilungen fur Kulturkunde Volume 32 ( 1986), 103-115.

16. " Some Observations on the short Hymns sung in Praise of Shaikh Nur Hussein of Bale" In The Diversity of the Muslim Community, ed. Ahmed el -Shahi, (London: Ithaca Press, 1987), 139-152.

17. " L'impact de la revolution chez les Oromo: Comment'ont-ils percu, comment ont-ils reagi?" In La Revolution ethiopienne comme phenomene de societe, edited by Joseph Tubiana, ( Paris: l'Harmattan, Bibliotheque Peiresec, 1990), 75-92.

18. " Big men and cattle licks in Oromoland" Social change and Applied Anthropology: Essays in Honor of David David W. Brokensha, edited by Miriam Chaiken & Anne K. Fleuret,( Boulder: Westview Press, 1990), 246-261.

19. " Oromo Blessings and Greetings" IN The Creative Communion, edited by Anita Jacoson-Widding & W. Van Beek ( Uppsala, Uppsala Studies in Cultural Anthropology , 1990), 235-250.

20. " Introduction " In *Guji Oromo Culture in Southern Ethiopia* by J. Van de Loo, ( Berli: ReinMer, 1991).
21. " Ethnic Boundaries and Development: Speculations on the Oromo Case" In *Inventions and Boundaries: Historical and Anthropological Approaches to the Study of Ethnicity & Nationalism*, edited by Kaarsholm Preben & Jan Hultin, ( Denmark: Roskilde University, 1994): 247-260.
22. " The Creation & Constitution of Oromo Nationality" In *Ethnicity & Conflict in the Horn of Africa*, edited by Fukui Katsuyoshi & John Markarkis, ( London: James Currey, 1994): 166-86.
23. " Towards a Comparative Ethnography of the Oromo" in *Being & Becoming Oromo: Historical & Anthropological enquiries*, edited by Paul Baxter et al,( Uppsala: Nordiska Afikanistitutet, 1996): 178-189.
24. " Components of moral Ethnicity: The case of the Oromo" In *Ethnicity and the state in Eastern Africa*, edited by Mohammed Salih & John Markarkis, ( Uppsala: OSSREA & SIAS, 1998).
25. " Changes and Continuities in Oromo Studies" *The Journal of Oromo Studies*, Volume 5, Numbers 1 & 2( July 1998):35-68).
26. " Obituary-Father Dr. Lambert Brtels, 1915-2001" *The Journal of Oromo Studies*, Volume 8, Numbers 1 & 2( July 2001): 184-186.

Besides the above, Dr. Paul Baxter edited a number of books on Oromo studies and published many other articles and book chapters in the field of social anthropology. He is described as the finest living social anthropologist in the United Kingdom. What is more, he educated so many scholars who have studied Oromo culture both in Kenya and Ethiopia.

# Protest letter to Columbia University

**Waldaa Qoranoo Oromoo**



**Oromo Studies Association**

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President Lee C. Bollinger  
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September 20, 2010

Dear president Bollinger,

I am writing this letter on behalf of the Oromo Studies Association (OSA), a scholarly, multi-disciplinary, non-profit international organization, established to promote studies on issues relevant to the Oromo who not only constitute over 40% of the Ethiopian population but also resides in other East African countries with a total of over 50 million people. OSA has studied & has produced scholarly works on Oromo people for the last twenty-five years. OSA has conducted annual & bi-annual international scholarly conferences, produced its proceedings and peer reviewed journals and books that you can find in major University libraries and library of Congress. We have historical evidences that the Euro-American racist social Darwinian theory has provided theoretical reasoning for the Abyssinian king Menilik to kill, enslave and colonize the Oromo people. Recently several academic institutions are providing forum to the Ethiopian Prime Minster Meles Zenawi –who is charged for Genocide. Because theories guide practice and in turn practices inform theories, we are very worried about this trend.

We the executive committee members of the Oromo Studies Association (OSA) are dismayed when we have learned that Columbia University's, World Committee on Global Thought has invited Mr. Meles Zenawi to be a keynote speaker. We expected the committee would maintain the reputation of the university high if it had made a close look at Mr. Zenawis leadership style, human rights records, and ask if he has some thing positive to offer to the world community before they invite him. We expected the committee would analyse whether or not providing such a forum to dictators and criminals discourages or encourages tyrants leaders like Mr. Zenawi to tighten the grip on the peoples they rule.

Here are some of troubling facts about the Ethiopia Prime Minster Mr. Zenawi.

Before he became the head of his guerrilla force – The Tigray People Liberation Front (TPLF) -- he was the head of Marxist Leninist League of Tigray (MLLT) and at that time he promoted the Albanian style of rigid communism. Zenawi came to power using the MLLT structure of organization known as GOOTI and he maintained the power for nearly two decades with this organizational structure. Under Zenawi all the fellow villagers and the dwellers of towns and cities are organized in a small group

known as Gooti and they are forced to spy and report the activity of their family and community members. ([Human Rights Watch](#), Vol. 17, No. 7 (A), May 2005)

To divide, incapacitate and rule the Zenawi regime has created ethnic and interethnic conflicts among the groups whom he sees as a threat. The Oromo people have repeatedly witnessed that their neighbouring ethnic groups with whom they have peacefully coexisted, armed by Mr. Zenawi forces burn properties and indiscriminately kill the young, old, men and women. Then hear from the state media as if it was an ethnic conflict. The Oromo people also witnessed when the Zenawi security forces armed one Oromo clan in order to kill another Oromo clan. In several occasions the Zenawi security forces deny the Oromo farmers access to fertilizers and selected seeds and in doing so deliberately starved them to death. ([“One Hundred Ways of Putting Pressure” Human Rights watch, March 24, 2010](#))

The Zenawi regime used Oromo farmers as minesweepers and deliberately burned the natural forests of Oromia. For example, in the 1999/2000 war with Eritrea in which over hundred thousands people have died many of these forces were used as minesweepers. To deny shelter and foods to the Oromo National Movement forces, the natural forests of Oromia had been burnt and several student protesters who condemned the action and volunteered to put out the fire were killed by the Ethiopian government security forces. ([OSA's Open Letter to the United Nations Climate Change Conference](#) December 12, 2009)

Mr. Zenawi security forces killed several school children and then declared that they died from natural causes. For example, Alemeworki Buli died of gunshot by the Ethiopian security forces and then presented to the world community as if she has died of a natural cause. Not only that, the security forced the family members to lie and tell on media that the cause of their daughter's death was a natural. ([US State Department Country Reports on Human Rights Practices - 2004 Ethiopia](#))

Zenawi regime allowed Alemayehu Garba, a handicapped student from Finfine University and many others to be jailed for their political view and killed Mr. Garba in a prison cell and then reported as if he was killed when he tried to escape from the prison ([Oromia Support Group](#), Press Release No 42, July 2005 - 2006). In the 2010 election campaign the Ethiopian security forces killed Biyyansa Dhibba and declared that he died of cancer.

In one of the official documents (HIZBAWI ADERA) Mr. Zenawi made it known that he is intended to eliminate or incapacitate Oromo intellectuals and deny the Oromo people a leadership. The list of crimes committed by Zenawi regime and his deceptions goes on and on.

Under Zenawi rule poverty level is farther deepen and the gaps between the poor and the rich have dramatically increased. Although Ethiopia gets the largest development aid in Sub-Saharan Africa amounting over \$1 billion dollars each year, it remains the poorest country in the world (see, <http://www.ophi.org.uk/policy/multidimensional-poverty-index/>) The poverty level is a clear indication of the social and economic policy of the regime.

Mr. Bollinger,

I am not alone to charge Zenawi for crimes. Genocide Watch is charging him for Genocide he committed against the Annuaks, Oromos, Ogdens and Sidamas, Amaharas and other people. Human Right Watch, Amnesty International and US State Departments have recorded that under the Zenawi regime human rights violations are widespread. It is believed that currently [over twenty thousand Oromo political prisoners](#) are languishing in Ethiopian jails. I ask you to reflect on the message you are passing to children who have lost their mothers and fathers to the regime and beg on the street for piece of bread. What is your answer if the voiceless parents who have lost their children to the regime and men and women who are languishing in the prison ask what are you trying to teach to the young minds by inviting a dictator and a criminal as your keynote speaker?

Mr. Bollinger,

I am aware that the issue of academic freedom and social responsibility is a longstanding debate in academia. However, I see the invitation of Mr. Zenawi to speak on academic forum neither corresponds to the ideas of academic freedom or free speech. I see it as creating a forum for dictators to propagate their ill motives and encouraging more of such leaders to emerge. You need to realise that this is one of the ways the Euro-America policy makers and institutions encouraged dictators to flourish. Your invitation to Mr. Zenawi is no different than legitimizing his evil actions.

Let me end my points with the words of a man who played a great role in shaping the American racial history and who challenged the American racist education - Martin Luther King who said "The function of education is to teach one to think intensively and to think critically... Intelligence plus character - that is the goal of true education."

If you agree with the Kings words mentioned above, Columbia University should be an academic institution where the ideas and ideologies that promote justice, equity, democracy and peace are flourished. Therefore, I urge you on behalf of those voiceless, dehumanized & impoverished people living under Mr. Zenawi 's rule to withdraw your invitation and to make sure that your institution is engaged in producing knowledge that promotes freedom, justice and human dignity.

Thank you

Begna F. Dugassa, PhD

OSA President

## VENUES TO THE 2011 MID YEAR & THE ANNUAL OSA CONFERENCES

- 1) We are pleased to announce that the Mid year 2011 OSA conference will be held in Ottawa, Canada, at Carleton University.

**Date:** April 2-3, 2011

**Theme of the conference:** to be determined

- 2) The Annual OSA conference will be held in Minneapolis, Minnesota, University of Minnesota. The preparation for the 25th anniversary of the formation of the association is underway. .

**Date:** July 29-31, 2011

**Theme of the conference:** to be determined

*Thank you,*

*Galatoomaa*